Effects of yoga during pregnancy on birth among primiparous women: A randomized controlled trial in Tokyo, Japan

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Aim: Yoga combines poses, breathing, and meditation, and can help women overcome labor challenges. The aim of this study was to clarify the effects of yoga during pregnancy on birth.

Methods: We started a randomized controlled trial at universities and hospitals from November 2014. The yoga intervention group (YG) practiced yoga from 18-23 gestational weeks until childbirth. The control group (CG) received customary care alone. Participants who delivered vaginally completed a questionnaire including the Experience of Birth (EB) scale at three to five days postpartum. The EB scale contains four subscales: Done well myself; Satisfactory with both mother and child being well; Presence of reliable obstetric staff and Awareness as a mother. Higher EB scores suggest better birth experiences. Scores of the two groups were compared using Mann-Whitney U-test. This study was registered as a clinical trial and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Tokyo.

Results: We analyzed 84 women (YG; n=47, and CG; n=37). EB scores were not significantly different between YG and CG. Nine women in the YG did not practice yoga during the last month of pregnancy. Thus, on secondary analysis, we compared women who actually perform yoga program in this study group (APYG; n=38) and the other group (OG; n=46). The only “done well myself” scores for the APYG were significantly higher than for the OG (p=0.029).

Conclusion: Practicing yoga during pregnancy may improve the scores of “done well myself”, including controlling pain and feeling relaxed during labor.

Biography
Momoko Kusaka obtained her Master of Health Science degree from the University of Tokyo. Currently, she is a Doctoral student in the Division of Health Sciences, Graduate School of Medicine, at the University of Tokyo, Japan. She is registered as a Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Research Fellow (DC2). She is majoring in Midwifery and Women’s Health. Her research topic is exercise during pregnancy, especially stress reduction effects of yoga.

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